

# Stress Management: Lifestyle Effects on Health



The way people live, their habits and stress coping behaviours, affect mental and physical health. Unfortunately, many people only seriously examine their lifestyle when they fall ill. Becoming ill or injured can seriously disrupt life, restricting daily activities and affecting work, relationships and leisure. Some lifestyle factors can add to this already stressful situation by hindering recovery or, worse still, increasing symptoms.

## How are lifestyle and health related?

Lifestyle factors related to health include:

- Negative thinking and worrying
- Stress and tension
- Diet
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Social Support

Below are some suggestions for improving these areas to promote better health.

## How can I reduce negative thoughts and worrying?

People who constantly worry and think negatively tend to have high levels of anxiety and tension. This can harm their physical health and complicate medical conditions. Trying to stop worrying can seem impossible, but there are ways that have been shown to work:

- When you find yourself worrying, write down your concerns and their possible negative and positive outcomes, no matter how likely or unlikely.
- Then, focus on the good points. Remind yourself that you may not like any of the outcomes, but you can and will be able to cope.
- If writing down outcomes is hard because you lack information, find out more by contacting recognised sources, such as medical specialists.
- Try to develop other areas to think about. Enlist your friends to help you do this and take up new activities where possible, such as reading, walking or watching movies.
- Try to be an objective “judge” and examine the factual evidence and likelihood of happening of your worries.



## How can I reduce stress and tension?

Stress and tension can lead to aches and pains, ranging from mild headaches or a stiff back to chronic migraines, sleep disturbance, poor appetite or binge eating and muscle spasms. Reducing stress is not easy but these tips should help.

- Recognise when you are stressed and try to identify what body area is most tense.
- Practice slow and deep breathing regularly, particularly when you are beginning to feel tense.
- Relax by visualising pleasant things, such as beautiful scenery and happy past events, or listen to calming music.
- Learn progressive muscle relaxation, which involves contracting and relaxing all the muscles in your body to induce a strong feeling of physical relaxation. It is generally best to see your psychologist for initial training.
- Talking about it to a caring and supportive friend may make more difference than you think.
- Being in nature such as hiking in the country or swimming in a secluded beach can provide an opportunity to develop an alternative perspective on your worries.
- Occasional brief weekend overseas excursions may offer emotional refreshment and break from the monotonous routine of busy city living, especially for expatriates who are not accustomed to crowded urban living environment.



## How can I improve my diet, exercise and sleep?

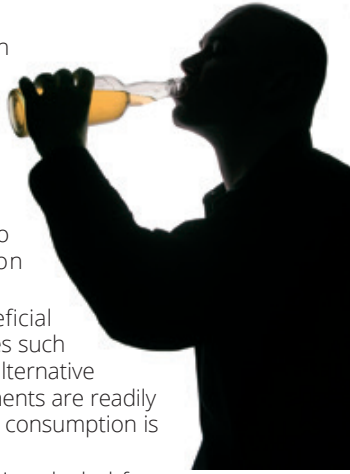
Diet, exercise and sleep are the three lifestyle factors that most often add to medical problems. Symptoms and treatments that most adversely affect appetite, energy levels and sleeping patterns. When coping with medical conditions it is important to:

### Eat well

- Eat regularly and choose nutritious foods that you enjoy.
- If you don't feel like eating, continue to nibble at foods you can tolerate.
- If your diet is restricted, discard non-diet foods to remove temptation.
- If possible, tell family and friends about your diet to gain their support.

## Reduced alcohol intake

- While alcohol consumption can provide momentary relaxation, the risk of developing dependence or abuse outweigh the benefits of regular alcohol over-drinking. Excessive alcohol use over time was found to have a depressing effect on one's mood.
- While anti-oxidants are beneficial from some alcoholic beverages such as regular red wines intake, alternative forms of anti-oxidant supplements are readily available and reduced alcohol consumption is generally recommended.
- Learning to say no to excessive alcohol for health reasons as part of the business etiquettes would prove helpful in minimizing risks of over-drinking or developing abuse.



## Exercise regularly

- Keeping active physically is essential for preventing injury and promoting health.
- If your medical condition prevents you from doing your preferred exercises, it is vital to learn other exercises and do them regularly. See your medical specialist for advice.

## Sleep well

- Having regular, quality sleep is critical when you have a medical condition.
- Sleeping well is promoted by minimising naps during the day, avoiding stimulants such as tea and coffee from mid-afternoon onwards, and exercising to physically tire your body.
- Avoid staying awake in bed, drinking warm milk, having a warm bath/shower, dimming household lighting before sleep can improve your sleep routine.

## What role does social support play?

Having a medical condition is often a stressful, frustrating and lonely experience. Feeling sick reduces motivation and opportunities to make social contact, especially if you are unable to work or attend social activities and new to your city of residence. Social support is vital to maintaining your quality of life, and there are ways to cultivate it. Recent studies indicate that there is a significant correlation between the number of friends and self-report sense of well-being.

## Getting the social support you need

- Write down a list of your friends and contact some to suggest catching up.
- Tell them about your situation and offer hints on how they can best support you. If you don't tell them how to support you appropriately, then they'll never know!
- Keep regular schedules of contact throughout the week. Book regular lunches and coffees, etc. Plan ahead to avoid unpleasant isolating gaps through the week. Maintaining regular electronic/ email contacts before face-to-face gathering.
- If your available social support is inadequate, consider making new friends through support groups, sports, hobby and interest groups, and volunteering in community service.

### Adapted by:

Dr Tommy Chan, Clinical Psychologist,  
Matilda International Hospital

### Reference:

Australian Psychological Society

*The materials contained here are for general health information only, and are not intended to replace the advice of a doctor. Matilda International Hospital and Matilda Medical Centres will not be liable for any decisions the reader makes based on this material.*

## How Psychologists Can Help?

Everyday problems, such as work stress, relationship troubles, coping with illnesses, grief and other negative life events, can seriously affect your health and quality of life. Addressing these concerns is vital to enjoying life and good relationships.

When self-help methods were not effective or when problems persist, consulting clinical psychologists can help with these situations. They equip individuals with the skills needed to function better and to prevent problems. Some of the common reasons why people visit psychologists include:

- Mood Disorders
- Anxiety
- Adjustment Difficulties
- Marital and Relationship Problems
- Eating Disorders
- Impact of Lifestyle Issues on Health
- Child-rearing Difficulties
- Behavioral Difficulties among Adolescents and Children
- Trauma, Grief and Losses
- Preventing Suicide



Research shows psychological treatments are effective in managing many common mental health related problems as the general public is more aware of the need for quality mental health care. Find out more about the effectiveness of psychological treatments: [www.psychology.org.au/community/effectiveness](http://www.psychology.org.au/community/effectiveness)

## Consulting a Psychologist

Registered Clinical Psychologists in Hong Kong follow guidelines about professional conduct, responsibilities and confidentiality that are set and monitored by the Hong Kong Psychological Society (BPS) and International Societies such as the American Psychological Association (APA), British Psychological Society and Australian Psychological Association (APS) Codes of Ethics. Registered Psychologists with professional memberships involve meeting academic and practice standards in addition to overseas statutory board or local registration requirements.

Psychologists can help you in different areas, including:

- Stress
- Fears, phobias, anxiety and panic attacks
- Depression
- Loss and grief
- Sexual difficulties
- Sleeping difficulties
- Eating and weight control problems
- Children's learning, behaviour and management problems
- Addictions
- Marital, family and relationship problems
- Improving relationships
- Parenting skills
- Personal growth
- Career planning
- Improving work efficiency
- Enhancing academic performance
- Training and developing staff
- Employment selection
- Reviewing organizational structure and practices
- Occupational health and safety

Scan the QR code to obtain information of our medical centre or clinic downtown



# 壓力處理： 生活方式對健康之影響



我們的生活模式、生活習慣和壓力處理都影響著個人的身心健康。不幸的是，不少人只會在病倒時，才會檢討自己的生活習慣。

患病或受傷對我們的生活難免構成衝擊，如不能進行一些日常活動，影響工作、關係和平日的閒暇活動等。部分的生活習慣和方式更會加深我們受壓的情況，以致阻礙復原、令病情惡化或增加其他的病徵。

## 生活方式與健康有什麼關係？

以下的生活因素與健康有著密切的關係：

- 負面思考與擔憂
- 壓力及時刻緊張
- 飲食習慣
- 運動
- 睡眠
- 社交、親朋的支持

以下是一些改善生活方式的提議，讓您生活得更健康。

## 我如何可以減少負面的思考及擔憂？

經常擔憂和消極思考的人士會有焦慮和過分緊張的傾向，這只會危害健康和加重病情。我們明白您或會難以停止擔憂事情，但您可以嘗試以下一些幫助舒緩情緒的方法：

- 當您感到憂慮時，把您所關注的事情及其可能/不可能發生的正面和負面的結果/事情寫下來
- 然後，專注正面的事情。儘使您不希望一些未如人意的事情發生，但您要提醒自己可以及有能力應付。
- 如果您因欠缺資料而未能寫下預期的結果，可諮詢一些認可的來源，如醫學專家。
- 多加嘗試，以分散注意力。您也嘗試一些新活動，如閱讀、走路和看電影等。若可以的話，您可找朋友一同參與。
- 嘗試客觀地評定和分析實證及你所擔憂的事情會否發生。



## 我如何減壓和舒緩緊張的情緒？

壓力和緊張可以導致疼痛和痛楚，包括輕微頭痛、慢性偏頭痛所引致的背部僵硬、睡眠受阻、食慾不振、暴食和肌肉抽筋。要減壓確實不容易，以下是一些小貼士，或會對情況有所幫助。

- 確認自己受壓，並嘗試認定身體什麼位置最感到壓力。
- 定時放慢呼吸及作深呼吸，尤其當您開始感到壓力。
- 構想一些開心的事情，如風光如畫的美景和過去開心的事件，以舒緩壓力。您亦可聆聽一些平和的音樂。
- 學習漸進式肌肉放鬆訓練，包括收緊及放鬆您全身的所有肌肉，讓身體能感受全面放鬆的感覺。一般而言，您需向心理學家諮詢和學習。
- 找一個懂得關懷別人的朋友傾訴及尋求支持，這或許會有所幫助。
- 融入大自然，如到郊外遠足或到僻靜的海灘游泳，可以為您的憂慮帶來新的思考角度。
- 您可偶然到海外過一個周末假期，把您單調而忙碌的都市生活停下來，喚發心情，讓您豁然開朗。這對於不太習慣擠迫的城市生活的外籍人士，尤其奏效，更可藉著短假期放鬆一下。



## 我如何改善飲食、運動和睡眠習慣？

飲食、運動和睡眠是三大構成疾病的生活方式成因。在許多情況下，徵兆和治療可影響食慾、體力和睡眠模式。故此，在對應疾病時，以下數點是十分重要的。

### 良好的飲食習慣

- 定時飲食，選擇您喜歡而富有營養的食物。
- 若您沒有胃口，嘗試吃幾口您能嚥下的食物。
- 若您需遵從特別的飲食指引，請把那些您不應吃的食物拿掉，以減除誘惑。
- 若可以的話，告訴家人和朋友有關您的飲食指引，尋求他們對您的支持。

## 減少飲酒

- 飲酒或許能一時助您紓解情緒，然而飲酒對健康的危害遠遠比“好處”大，如您或會染上酒癮和酗酒。長時間過量飲酒也會令情緒低落。
- 部分酒精含有對身體有益的抗氧化物，如紅酒和紅酒補充劑，然而，我們仍建議您減少飲酒。
- 顧及您的健康，學習向過量飲酒說不，這將有助減少酗酒及避免染上酒癮。



## 定期運動

- 養成運動的習慣，這對預防損傷和保持身體健康，乃十分重要。
- 若你的健康狀況不能讓您進行愛好的運動，您可選擇其他的運動項目，並要持之以恆。您可諮詢醫生，了解該運動是否適合自己。

## 良好的睡眠習慣

- 當您患病時，定時和優質睡眠對您十分重要。
- 日間時，請減少小睡；下午近黃昏起，減少飲用茶、咖啡等刺激性的飲品；運動令身體疲倦，也可改善睡眠。
- 不要只躺在床上而不睡，喝一些暖奶，沖一個暖水浴、把家裡的燈光調校得暗一點，都可改善您睡眠的質素與健康。

## 社交與親朋的支持擔當什麼角色？

患病通常會令您感到受壓、失意和寂寞。與此同時，您或會減低社交的意欲，尤其當您未能繼續工作或身體欠佳去不能出席社交活動，又或您初到該城市居住。社交與親朋的支持可平衡您的生活，也讓您充實生活。近年的研究顯示，朋友的數目與自我評核身心靈健康有著明顯的關係。

要取得親人和友伴的支持，您需要：

- 寫下朋友的名字，自動聯絡和相約他們聚會。
- 告訴他們您的病情、暗示他們如何能給予您支持。若您沒有告訴他們如何支持您，他們永不會知道如何伸出援手。
- 不時保持連繫，定期相約聚餐或會面。早點安排聚會以避免某些時段過於空閒。除了在聚會中碰面外，您也可藉著電郵/互聯網保持連繫。
- 若您感到身邊的支持不足夠，您可透過有關的支援團體、運動、嗜好和興趣小組認識新朋友，您也可以當義工，擴闊生活圈子。

### 編寫：

註冊臨床心理學家陳慶滿博士

### 參考資料：

澳洲心理學會

此健康單張所提供的資訊僅供參考之用，並不能取代醫生的專業意見。明德國際醫院及明德醫療中心對讀者在閱讀後所作出的任何決定並不負上任何責任。

## 心理學家如何可以幫助您？

許多日常遇到的問題，如工作壓力、關係的問題、應付疾病、悲傷和其他生活不如意的事件，都會影響您的健康和生活質素。勇於面對問題，對於享受生活和建立良好的關係乃是十分關鍵的。

當自助的方法不奏效或問題持續，您可諮詢臨床心理學家，協助您應付問題。他們能夠幫助有需要的人士裝備自己和學習一些技巧，以取得更佳的表现和預防問題發生。以下是諮詢心理學家的常見原因。

- 情緒病
- 焦慮
- 適應問題
- 婚姻和關係問題
- 飲食問題
- 影響健康的生活方式
- 育兒難題
- 青少年和兒童的行為問題
- 創傷、悲傷和痛失友伴
- 自殺的預防



研究顯示心理治療對於許多精神健康的問題頗有成效，而大眾亦越來越對優質的精神健康治療有著需求。您可瀏覽[www.psychology.org.au/community/effectiveness](http://www.psychology.org.au/community/effectiveness)，閱讀更多有關心理治療成效的資料。

## 諮詢心理學家

香港註冊的臨床心理學家須遵從由香港心理學會及國際專業組織如美國心理學會、英國心理學會和澳洲心理學會所訂立及監管的專業守則、責任和病人資料保密的指引。已註冊成為專業心理學會會員的心理學家除了要符合本地或海外法定委員會的註冊規定，並須達到其所要求的學術水平和執業標準。

心理學家可以幫助您面對以下的情況：

- 受壓
- 受驚、恐懼症、焦慮和受恐慌性襲擊
- 抑鬱
- 失去親友或悲傷
- 性障礙
- 睡眠問題
- 飲食和體重控制問題
- 兒童的學習、行為和管教問題
- 上癮
- 婚姻、家庭和關係的問題
- 改善關係
- 管教子女技巧
- 個人成長
- 計劃事業
- 改善工作效率
- 改進學業表現
- 培訓和發展員工的潛力 / 技能
- 企業選才
- 檢討公司 / 組織之架構和實務
- 職業健康與安全

掃描以下QR Code，查閱醫院位於市區的醫療中心或診所資料

